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SUBJECT: NIGERIAN DISTRACTED DRIVING STATISTICS

REF: 10 STATE 703; 10 ABUJA 248

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SUMMARY  
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¶1. The Nigerian Federal Road Safety Corps provided annual statistics and information regarding the country's recent uptick in distracted driving in response to Embassy's demarche (reftel A). Cell phone usage while operating a motor vehicle in Nigeria is illegal under federal law, yet, the Federal Road Safety Corps observed an upsurge in the number of accidents resulting from distracted driving from 2008 and 2009. The Federal Road Safety Corps has coupled law enforcement efforts with broad public awareness campaigns in its strategy to address this quantified increase in distracted driving in Nigeria. END SUMMARY.

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PREVALENCE OF CELL PHONE USAGE WHILE DRIVING  
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¶2. Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) Special Assistant to the Corps Marshal Janet Adepegba reported that the prevalence of cell phone usage by Nigerian motorists while driving has become a source of concern. Motorists receiving and making calls, reading, typing, and sending text messages has led to an increase in traffic accidents and its attendant consequences. Precise statistics concerning the prevalence of cell phone usage while driving are not available, although the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) estimates that there are roughly 62,988,492 active mobile telephone subscribers in the country, up from 33,858,022 as recently as 2006. An average increase of 50 percent of mobile telephone subscribers per year from 2001 to 2006 reflects the rapid growth of mobile telephone usage in Nigeria.

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CELL PHONE USAGE LAWS  
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¶3. The FRSC sought legislation making the use of cell phones while driving an offence punishable under federal law in 2007. Part II,

Section 10, Sub-Section 4(ff) of the Federal Road Safety Commission Act of 2007 known as Federal Road Safety Commission (Establishment) Act, 2007 is the section of federal law that makes the use of a cell phone while driving illegal in Nigeria. The National Road Traffic Regulations 2004 Section 80 (7) and the Nigerian Highway Code (2 Edition, 2008) reinforce this federal law.

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ACCIDENTS, INJURIES, AND FATALITIES

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14. Observed statistical trends indicate that while the overall number of accidents are decreasing, distracted driving-related accidents as well as the number of people injured as a result are increasing. Total number of annual accidents, both related and unrelated to distracted driving, declined by four percent, from 11,341 in 2008 to 10,854 in 2009. However, the portion of accidents which occurred as a result of distracted driving increased by 12 percent, from 680 in 2008 to 760 in 2009. Data from the FRSC also illustrates a 71 percent spike in the number of people injured in accidents involving distracted drivers, from

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1,119 in 2008 to 1,909 in 2009. However, fatalities resulting from accidents involving distracted drivers declined by 14 percent, from 333 in 2008 to 285 in 2009. (See attached Distracted Driving Related Accidents graph.)

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NATIONAL AWARENESS AND EDUCATION CAMPAIGNS

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15. The FRSC reported that it is reaching the general public by pursuing public awareness, education campaigns, and disseminating information through print and electronic media. The FRSC, in conjunction with National Youth Service Corps, has mounted a nationwide public awareness and education campaign on the dangers associated with the use of mobile phones while driving. The FRSC and National Youth Service Corps members already deployed to primary and secondary schools focus a portion of their address to students on the public health implications of driving while distracted. Children are encouraged to remind adult drivers of the law that prohibits the use of cell phones while driving. These public health messages are also being shared at motor parks through organized seminars and workshops for stakeholders. The FRSC utilizes electronic and print media, handbills, and posters to educate the general public.

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EFFECTIVENESS OF LAWS, LAW ENFORCEMENT, OR OTHER EDUCATIONAL EFFORTS

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16. The FRSC has in the past three years carried out enforcement to

ensure compliance on non-usage of mobile phones while driving. A total of 3,651 arrests were made in 2007 for offences related to use of mobile phones while driving. The number of arrests increased by 23 percent in 2008 to 4,769, but decreased by 13 percent to 4,204 in 2009 due to enforcement. (See attached Distracted Driving Arrests graph.)

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COMMENT  
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17. Embassy was pleased to learn of the FRSC's interest and commitment to the tracking, enforcement, and sensitization of the general public to the dangers of distracted driving. The FRSC has already reached out to the U.S. Office of Security Operations in Abuja to benefit from the National Guard State Partnership Program (SPP), through which four FRSC officers are today receiving highway patrol training in Sacramento and Oakland, California. Embassy is working to find a way to send Nigerian prosecutors to the U.S. to receive formal training in developing legal cases against distracted drivers. Corps Marshal Osita Chidoka told Embassy during an earlier meeting (reftel B) that the FRSC's biggest need in this area was to find a way to convict drivers who denied that they were using cell phones at the time they were charged for this offense. END COMMENT.  
SANDERS